



Vol. 23, #2

Thursday • January 21, 1999

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Tribe receives economic development designation

By Mike Wilber
MNN Reporter

The Menominee Tribe, along with the Mole Lake Sokaogon Chippewa and the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa, recently received a designation by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to bolster economic development.

Immediately, it means a \$250,000 grant for development of the areas, said Bryce Luchterhand, state director for the USDA Rural Development program.

"This is your show," Luchterhand told representatives of the participating communities at a press conference at the Menominee Casino.

"When you get the plans together, projects ready, we want to step up and fund them."

The three tribes and their surrounding communities, dubbed "Northwoods Niiit," were designated an "Enterprise Community" by the USDA. Over the next ten years, they will be eligible for

a share of \$150 million in proposed federal grants. The designation will also give them preference in seeking grants from 14 other federal agencies. Businesses looking to set up in the Enterprise Community could also be given tax breaks.

"This designation will help cut the red tape," said Lew

Boyd, project manager for the tribe's economic development department. "This project is for the people, not administration," Boyd, along with Gale Kruger, director of the economic development office, lead the application process.

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Federal Government says state can return Indian remains for burial

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Scientists and American Indian leaders say a federal decision that will lead to the reburial of Indian remains in Minnesota could lead to similar moves in other states.

Minnesota alone has as many as 1,400 sets of Indian remains, most of them gathered by scientists who excavated burial sites decades ago.

"It is a revolutionary change, and Minnesota is out in front," state archaeologist Mark Dudzik said of the federal decision. "What we have done will be a prototype and a model for other states."

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Headstart hits the slopes!



MNN photo/Karmay Dickerson

Children from the Neopit, South Branch and Keshena Headstart enjoyed a morning of sliding with parents and staff on January 20th and 21st.

Peters receives top vote in final Tribal Legislature Election

Menominee tribal members have declared their choices for three open seats on the Menominee Tribal Legislature.

Wilmer Peters, Jr., received the top vote with 420. Margaret Snow followed close behind with 410, while fellow incumbent Lewellyn 'Lew' Boyd captured the third place position with 381 votes in their bid for re-election to the Legislature. Snow will be entering her third consecutive term while Boyd will begin his second consecutive term.

The results of the remaining candidates who were on the ballot went as follows: Keith Tourtellot, 317; Orman Waukau, 316; and Robert Deer, 289. Deer first served on the legislature in 1989 through 1994 and from 1996 to present.

Three (3) write-in candidates were unsuccessful in their bid as well, they include: Sylvia Wilber, 270; Sarah Skubitz, 196 and Karen Neonish-Gardner, 177.

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Jan. 22, 1999

ELECTION:

There were some concerns voiced by tribal members as to the validity of the write-in candidates being able to run in the final election. The question that was raised was whether it was constitutional for candidates whose name did not appear on the ballot in the Primary were able to run as a write-in in the final.

There is nothing stated in the Menominee Constitution that would disallow tribal members to run as a write-in according to Davey Jean Peters, Secretary of the Election Commission. However, candidates are required to take out nomination papers that must be filed with the election office by the specified deadline with a minimum of 100 signatures of enrolled tribal members. The purpose of tribal members being certified when they take out nomination papers is to ensure that their name will appear on the Primary ballot and that they are an enrolled member.

Those tribal members who decide to run as a write-in candidate are taking a risk of not being elected because their name does not appear on the ballot. Historically, there has never been a write-in candidate elected.

According to the election office, there were 1117 votes cast in the final election which included Neopit, Keshena and absentee ballots. The final election was held on Wednesday, January 13 in Neopit and Thursday, January 14 in Keshena.

The swearing-in ceremony will be held on Tuesday, February 9, 1999 in the Blackhawk room at the Menominee Nation Casino in Keshena, Wisconsin.

BURIAL:

"The ruling offsets a national precedent that is bound to help tribes in other states, which are still fighting this issue," said Jim Jones of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. Progress has already been made on returning to Indian tribes skeletal remains that can be directly linked to present-day tribes. Now the federal government has given a state permission to repatriate and rebury remains that are too old to be tied to any particular tribe.

"The objection has always been, 'We don't know who to give them to,'" Dudzik said. "But the fact is, we know they're Indians." The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Review Committee approved the new policy. Dudzik said in a letter to the committee that 'a sense of common decency' was at stake. "To have decided otherwise, to have left the remains of these people in boxes and on shelves for an indefinite future, would have only resulted in continuing rancor and pain," he said.

Most of the remains are at Hamline University, which is serving as an intermediary between the various institutions that once held them and the American Indian community. Indian leaders hope to start the reburials as soon as this spring, said Jones, a member of the Leech Lake band of Chippewa, and they

may organize a major ceremony to mark the historic occasion.

One point of contention remains. The federal government says it does not have legal authority to authorize the reburial of objects such as pottery that were buried with bodies and later collected by scientists. "It doesn't make sense to us that we can't do that," Jones said. Those who don't appreciate the importance of that should imagine their grandma's grave being disturbed and her wedding ring being separated from her remains, said Tom Trow, chairman of the University of Minnesota's Committee on Repatriation of Cultural Property. Dudzik said the imminence of reburial is good for science because it has forced scientists to document what they have. "We have gained information because some of these collections were poorly documented, if they were documented at all," he said.

The federal government got involved in the dispute in the 1980s as Indian leaders grew more outspoken about the racism they felt was involved in digging up their ancestors' graves. Most experts were grateful for the federal push but say federal involvement has made everything more cumbersome for states such as Minnesota that were already on their way to consensus.

Francis McManamon, manager of the National Park Service's Archeology and Ethnography Program, said Minnesota is the first state to strike a deal that applies to all of its human remains. Iowa is the only other state that is close, he said. "Minnesota came forward with a solution that everyone agreed to, which recognizes the scientific value but also that ultimately some repose should be afforded," he said. Jones said the reburials are overdue. "The feeling in Indian country is that these remains belong back in the ground," he said. "They've been sitting on shelves long enough.